

# The Sun

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## A New Declaration of Independence.

The excellent bill to amend the public health law which is now before the Legislature as the result of the competent Health Commission appointed by Governor STUYVESANT leaves little to be criticized. There is one point, however, that demands more serious consideration than it appears to have received. This act singles out New York city among all the cities of this State for independence of the supervision of the State health authorities, without stating any reason for this distinction. As the commission which recommended this act is officered and probably led by those members who are now part and parcel of the sanitary administration of the great city it doubtless and with good reason regards its sanitary government as above reproach.

It is but too true that New York city has not for a long time if ever enjoyed so wise and energetic a sanitary supervision as it now has; but it is also true that times change and Health Commissioners change with them. Since the new law wisely provides that the State Health Commissioner shall be appointed for six years, the changes in this department will not be so frequent as those in the city health department, nor will they be synchronous with the latter. Moreover the new law provides that the Health Commissioner must have certain special qualifications for his office, while up to the present administration the city health officer has not been so guarded. To forestall the possible dangers of these recurrent changes the new law should be so worded that no city or town shall be exempt from supervision of the State Health Commissioner.

It is obvious that such supervision will not interfere with the regulations of a city board of health whose action is in accord with accepted principles of hygiene, as is that of New York city now. There could be no clash of authority on these vital matters, and any clash upon other points is not worth providing for. For purposes of harmonious sanitary efficiency New York city should, like other cities, be under the jurisdiction of the State Health Commissioner except in strictly local matters. Examples to demonstrate the absolute correctness of this proposition are abundant. The following are illustrations: At a public dinner in Goshen seventeen undoubted cases of typhoid fever, resulting in one death, besides thirty-three cases of gastro-intestinal diseases, were traced by Dr. STILES of the Public Health Service to oysters taken from the waters of Jamaica Bay and floated in a creek near Canarsie. Dr. STILES discovered that millions of gallons of sewage find their outlet in Jamaica Bay. In such a case is there any reason why the State Commissioner should not have the authority to direct the city Health Commissioner to investigate and report on the matter and to enforce if necessary the remedying of it?

Outbreaks of typhoid fever have occurred in dairy districts which the inspectors know are supplying the city with milk, cream and butter. Should not the State Health Commissioner be empowered to direct the city health officers to ascertain whether any consumers of these dairy products have sickened, and thus aid in fattening the true source and extent of the epidemic?

The act should be so worded that the autonomy of the city health boards shall be fully recognized in all local questions, while the State health authorities are invested with untrammelled jurisdiction in all matters concerning the welfare of the State. Under the law now under consideration New York city is authorized to disregard the interests of other portions of the State if it so chooses, but is not amenable to a reciprocal discipline.

Aside from these and other practical objections it would be a curiosity of legislation to place New York city upon a pinnacle of sanitary holiness towering high above all other cities in the State, the Union or the world.

While the present high standing of the health management of our city may condone such action, the momentous fact must be borne in mind that the new health law must be enacted for today or tomorrow, but for the future protection of the State and the city, an integral part of the State.

## A Traditional Policy Assailed.

So accustomed are New Yorkers to the development of the water front to meet the needs of yesterday that Dock Commissioner SMITH's plans for a long pier at the foot of West Forty-sixth street will probably be received with general incredulity. Mr. SMITH actu-

ally purposes to build a pier large enough for any ship now in service or building, and to construct it in such fashion as to make its extension a matter of little difficulty in case a greater length is needed in the future.

This is revolutionary. It violates all the precedents of the Dock Department. It overturns a treasured tradition of the city. It suggests good sense, good management and business provision. It is in violent opposition to the practice of the past, which has been to provide a little less than was needed and to ignore entirely the probabilities of further growth.

Commissioner SMITH is an iconoclast. He will do well to guard himself against attack by those who will be alarmed and affronted over his bold projection of intelligence into city administration.

## Remaking the State Constitution.

Under the Constitution the question of holding a constitutional convention would be submitted to the voters at the general election of 1916, but all the political conventions of last year declared for an earlier convocation. Hence the majority in the Legislature is entirely justified in its contention that the bills which have been passed by both houses are in accordance with the pledges given to the voters before the election of 1912.

The objection to these measures is that they provide for a special election in June to decide whether a convention shall be held, and, if this question is answered in the affirmative, for the election of delegates thereto at the general election in November. This programme is denounced as a Tammany scheme for hampering fusion on a city ticket here this fall through creating dissension among the various politicians opposed to the regular Democratic organization in New York county. On the other hand, this is an "off year" in the State election, and outside of New York city suitable for the consideration of candidates for delegate to the convention.

The best thing to do under the circumstances would be to defeat the proposal for a constitutional convention in June, and have the question submitted again in 1916. Filled though those days be with wisdom, a delay of two years in remaking the Constitution would not affect seriously any great principle or reform. Were this course adopted the platform pledges of 1912 would have been fulfilled, the city elections would be undisturbed in 1913, and the Constitution would receive attention as early as necessary.

## Short Be the Pang!

Not greatly changed the tariff bill comes back from the Democratic caucus to the House to-day.

May the prophecies that it will be shipped to the Senate by May 15 and become law by July 1 be dreams from the Gate of Horn and not the Gate of Ivory!

Be it good, pretty good, fair, bad, pretty bad or indifferent, hurry it up. Have the operation and the agony over and let business pick up, get out and go about its business!

## The White Birch as a Symbol.

The suffragettes who seized the top of the monument on Fish Street Hill and barricaded the gate to flaunt the banner of "Votes for Women" over Billingsgate would doubtless regard as workings, Mrs. HARRIET STANTON BLANCH, Miss INEZ MILHOLLAND and their sisters who planted five white birch trees on the Central Park green to promote their cause.

The selection of this variety of birch was a happy inspiration. Betula populifolia, white, slender and graceful, is the most admired of American trees. Poets, painters and naturalists acknowledge its enduring charm. In a land where woman's influence is greater than elsewhere in the world this tree is appropriately known as "the lady of the forest." Wherever there are homes outside the city, in the valley and on the slope, in sight of every shining river and in every sequestered spot, the white birch is treasured above other trees. There are few things more beautiful than a wood of swaying white birches.

In America the ballot is not to be won for women by violence and grotesque publicity, but by appealing to reason and the kindling of sympathy. The most womanly among the leaders and advocates of the cause are its successful promoters in this country. They command respect, regard and confidence. The methods employed by them are never repellent. The woman suffragists in America could choose no better symbol than the white birch. Among trees it best represents an American's ideal of womanhood; and it is a tree of rapid growth.

## Eyes and Tongues.

Emerging from one of his conferences with those unnamed "thoughtful" advisers who keep him informed on the sentiment of the nation, the Hon. THOMAS RILEY MARSHALL propounded:

"The rich are blind."

Of the truth of this statement we know nothing, but we are driven to the belief that if the Hon. THOMAS RILEY MARSHALL would give an imitation of a dumb man for the next forty-six and a half months, the sum of human happiness would be greatly increased.

## The New England Leaven.

At the annual maple sugar feast of the other night in Springfield, where the power of the New England digestion is proved by the consumption of doughnuts and cucumber pickles as well as the product of the sugar bush, Professor HENRY W. HILBERT triumphed over "the fashion of late to give New England a place in the rear column of the American procession." He had apparently read "Who's Who in America" from cover to cover and digested it, for he announced that more than 20 per cent. of the 18,794 celebrated persons whose names are collected in it were born in New England. He calculated

that at least half of all the immortals were of New England parentage on one side or the other.

To challenge the tally a man would have to scan each separate page of the 2,363 in that compilation of eminent and self-selected Americans, and it is easier to allow that Professor HILBERT is right. This 20 per cent., he says, "were brought up under the peculiar racial and stimulating intellectual and moral conditions that prevailed in those parts [New England] from 1820 to about 1880, and which had the formative part to play in these lives, giving them their bent and inspiration and putting leadership naturally in their hands."

But there is even a larger view than this, and the remarkable thing is that it escaped a mind so analytical. All the "Who's Who" are not in "Who's Who in America." Some are not chosen, and some do not try to break into the charmed circle. There are meritorious but humble people who do great things that are not proclaimed from the house-top, and there are others of no particular genius who lack the push to get into the company of the marshalled great in "Who's Who." All is not gold that glitters there.

Now it must be obvious that a whole lot of people of New England birth or parentage and who have enjoyed New England culture are not on the published roll of merit. One cannot count them, which is an advantage in a way that the sociologist and thinker, for they can be estimated in full round numbers. The influence of New England in moulding the conscience and thought and contributing to the progress of the country must therefore be much greater than Professor HILBERT conceives. The margin may be anywhere from 50 per cent. up. There is perhaps no way to determine it except by conning the census returns in Washington. It would be no such easy task as turning the pages of "Who's Who." Will any man of New England birth or parentage volunteer?

## Truck Thieves.

Nobody who is acquainted with the number of thefts from trucks and delivery wagons will doubt the statement of a confessed receiver of stolen goods that his profits amounted to \$50,000 in a little over three months. The losses of business houses through the dishonesty of drivers reach a great sum each year. Yet there seems to be no reason why this form of robbery should not be reduced to inconsiderable proportions.

All thieves of this kind depend on receivers of stolen goods to take their loot from them promptly. Most of these receivers are in New York city, though some transact their business in nearby New Jersey settlements. Wherever their headquarters are, the business they carry on cannot fail to attract attention, and a close police inspection of all suspected establishments would shut up their shops in short order. No great skill is needed in the detective department to discover dealers in stolen goods, and the mere watching of their places of business would end their activities. This done, the work of suppressing out of town "fences" would be comparatively simple.

The Hon. WILLIAM C. REDFIELD, Secretary of Commerce, is a shrewd and successful business man and he sees the danger to the Democrats should too high hopes be excited of instant reduction of the cost of living as a result of tariff reduction. There may be "some lowering," but it will be "slow" and may be "local" in effect. Wise caution! Mr. REDFIELD continues:

"Tariff reduction does not cut all the roots of the high cost of living. It strikes at some of the more artificial causes of that cost and makes it easier for the people as a whole to deal with the other real problems involved in that question."

We wonder just how the people are going to deal, for example, with the increased production of gold.

The Republican party has retained its position. (Continued Commercial Tribune.)

The position seems to be that of the Hon. JOHN PHOENIX when he held his opponent down.

## "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—It seems to me, with all due respect, that you do not quite get the quality and meaning of Vice President Marshall's oratorical tendencies. What is new in the political portions of Washington and the clean shaved and unsexed East generally is normal, established and venerated in Indiana. All Indian orators are now founded upon the school of Indiana fiction, which is frankly emotional, unreserved and unshaken. "Uncle Tom," as he is affectionately called out here, steps right out of the Declaration of Independence and calmly declares at the outset of his long forgotten document left out.

If God has not sent President Wilson to perpetrate Jeffersonianism then a great many applicants for Federal office in this State are doomed to be bogged in awful disappointment.

Just give Uncle Tom a chance.

A GEORGE ABE DEMOCRAT.

NEW ALBANY, Ind., April 17.

## The Bird Cage.

Among the bills introduced in the California Legislature is one limiting and defining the size of bird cages.

A line of light on legislation's page.

Efficient even as the Golden Gate.

To which it owes its origin late.

Oh, for John Hancock's pen to scrawl the date.

"The dicky bird must have a three foot cage."

A hymn, a psalm progressive as the age.

As musically murmurous as bees.

Or bulbous brooding over labyrinthine seas.

Or ought audaciously melting you may say.

The dicky bird must have a three foot cage.

Why, let the heathen rage.

Let pomp and power pulverized depart.

As erst at Nineveh and Tyre, start.

Each eagle buoyantly before his cart.

"The dicky bird must have a three foot cage."

Here, then, ye Solons, is your guide and aim in the future as a star.

A mark that upward towers from afar.

To last as long as Phobos drives his car.

"The dicky bird must have a three foot cage!"

MAURICE MORRIS.

## THE AUTOPSY BILL.

Statement From the Physician Who Is Its Author, With Brief Comment.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—I will permit you to correct a misconception in the mind of the writer of the editorial article "An Invasion of Private Rights," which appeared in THE SUN of April 17 and which purports to analyze the provisions of the Autopsy Bill, Assembly Bill No. 1,206, entitled "An Act to Amend the Public Health Law in Relation to the Control and Regulation of Autopsies."

If you will refer to this bill, a copy of which I enclose, you will see that it provides: "A copy of the findings and diagnosis of every autopsy held within the State of New York shall be filed with the State Health Commissioner, and shall become a matter of public record open to the inspection of and transcription by one affected or likely to be affected in a civil or criminal action by the contents of such report of record, or of a Justice of the Supreme Court."

Unless you impugn the integrity and common decency of the Coroners and the Judges of the courts of record and of the Supreme Court it would be difficult to see how the State Health Commissioner, who is empowered to provide, and to provide, rules and regulations in regard to certificates of births and deaths and require that every duly qualified physician, and so strictly is this rule interpreted by the coroners, who are engaged recently in determining whether or not an osteopath was qualified so to certify, and so jealously are those records guarded that even a physician bent upon collecting statistics of the epidemic of typhoid may not have access to those records, and I have yet to hear of a case of "blackmail" perpetrated upon those records which are open to the inspection of and transcription by one affected or likely to be affected in a civil or criminal action by the contents of such report of record, or of a Justice of the Supreme Court, precisely as I would have autopsy records safeguarded.

As the law now stands the coroner is the "legitimate" authority who is charged with determining the cause of death under certain circumstances, and he is not to be investigated or autopsied or all of these things, the cause of death in cases where a physician has not been in attendance and the coroner certifies, or where the element of criminality is involved, and where the coroner may be the personal opinion of doctors with regard to the usefulness or dignity of the coroner as a public officer, the fact remains that he is the official designated by the law to determine the cause of death under certain circumstances, and he is not to be investigated or autopsied or all of these things, the cause of death in cases where a physician has not been in attendance and the coroner certifies, or where the element of criminality is involved, and where the coroner may be the personal opinion of doctors with regard to the usefulness or dignity of the coroner as a public officer, the fact remains 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